

Pulse

Are pagers replacing the stethoscope as a medical symbol?

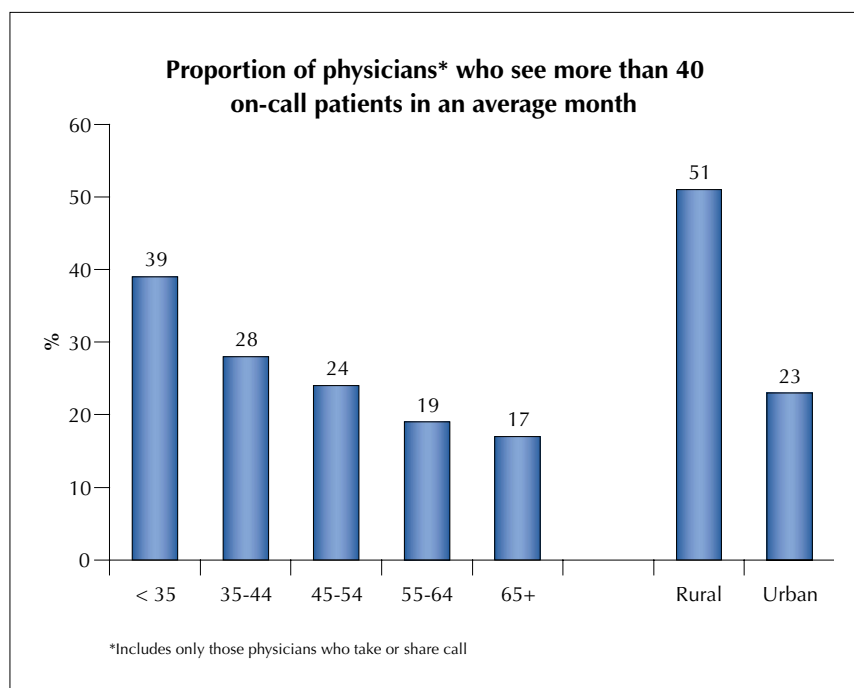
The recently released CMA 2000 Physician Resource Questionnaire found that 76% of Canadian physicians regularly take or share call duties. Until they turn 65, age has little effect on the proportion of doctors who accept call. However, by the time they reach that late stage of their careers, only

50% of physicians are still taking call.

Doctors younger than 35 are more likely to log more call hours in an average month: 22% of younger doctors reported working over 180 shared call hours per month (a schedule more frequent than 1 in 4), compared with an overall result of 16%.

Not surprisingly, rural doctors are more likely than their urban colleagues to put in more than 180 shared call hours per month (25% versus 15%). Surgical specialists are more than twice as likely to record more than 180 hours of shared call per month than are GP/FPs (27% vs. 13%); 15% of medical specialists reported more than 180 hours of shared call in an average month.

Younger physicians and those in rural practice also tend to see more patients during their call rotations. Among physicians under age 35, 39% see more than 40 on-call patients per month. This proportion decreases consistently with age, with only 17% of physicians aged 65 and older treating more than 40 on-call patients per month. More than half (51%) of rural physicians report attending to more than 40 on-call patients per month, compared with 23% of their urban colleagues. Although the age-group differences lessen somewhat when one controls for total hours of shared call per month, rural doctors are consistently twice as likely as urban doctors to see more than 40 on-call patients per month, irrespective of the total number of shared call hours per month. — *Shelley Martin, martis@cma.ca*



Manitoba hopes to lure specialists with signing bonuses

The Manitoba government has reversed its stance on paying incentives to specialists by putting aside \$1 million for just that purpose. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is now offering signing bonuses worth up to \$15 000 from the \$1-million fund, which was created last fall but not publicized until recently.

Earlier, Health Minister Dave Chomiak repeatedly said that his government would not get into a bidding war with other provinces to entice

specialists to Manitoba. However, while Chomiak was publicly criticizing incentives, his government was clandestinely handing out bonuses to a few specialists who had become aware of the deal.

Dr. Mark Heywood, past president of the Manitoba Medical Association, says the MMA decided to publicize the bonuses to ensure that all doctors were aware of them.

Pam Trupish, the authority's new specialist physician recruiter, says it is

too early to say how effective the bonuses will be at enticing out-of-province specialists to move to Manitoba. To date, 5 specialists have moved to Winnipeg, 4 have gone to Brandon and a Winnipeg surgeon relocated to northern Manitoba.

Dr. Brock Wright, the authority's chief medical officer, says Winnipeg still needs 36 specialists, including 5 general internists, 4 cardiologists and 3 pediatric surgeons. — *David Square, Winnipeg*